



Brownhills Community Technology College

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 104248
Local Authority Walsall
Inspection number 286890
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Gwendoline Coates HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Deakin Avenue
School category	Community		Brownhills
Age range of pupils	11–18		Walsall WS8 7QG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01543 452886
Number on roll (school)	1000	Fax number	01543 370105
Number on roll (6th form)	120		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Fran Hodgkinson
		Headteacher	Helen Keenan
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	20–21 September 2006	286890

Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Brownhills is an average-sized comprehensive school. A majority of its students come from areas of relative social and economic deprivation where adults' experience of higher education is well below average. Less than 4% of students are from minority ethnic groups. The school provides a range of community leisure and sporting facilities, and hosts an on-site nursery. It gained specialist technology status in 2002. Between May 2004 and the beginning of September 2006, the school was without a permanent headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The school works well in partnership with its primary feeder schools, its vocational education partners and a range of agencies to support the individual needs of its students and to promote their well-being.

The school's self-evaluation is a clear and accurate reflection of its strengths and weaknesses. Improvement since the last inspection, particularly in relation to meeting statutory requirements for the curriculum, is evident. A new, permanent headteacher and a senior leadership team, strengthened by new appointments, are ensuring that the school now has a satisfactory capacity to improve and are rapidly putting in place structures and strategies to promote and sustain such improvement. There is a common sense of purpose among staff and students, who want to see improvement and to feel proud of their school.

Students enjoy their time at school and make satisfactory progress, although the standards they attain are still exceptionally low at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE and below average at A-level. Past weaknesses in monitoring students' progress, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and in the effectiveness of middle management, and below average attendance by students have contributed to these low overall standards. The new, strong leadership is dealing with these barriers to the students' learning but they are still present, although the more rigorous approach to setting targets and monitoring students' progress is starting to improve it.

Students feel safe and confident at school and suggest that there is always a member of staff who they can talk to if they have a problem. Healthy eating and the range of extra-curricular sporting activities encourage students to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school's impressive swimming pool and other sporting and leisure facilities are an important asset to the local community, and the extra-curricular musical and dramatic productions give joy to the school and the wider community.

The school's specialist technology status has enabled it to fund investment in information and communication technology and related technologies to the benefit of all departments, its local primary school cluster and the local community.

Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, its performance in relation to standards of attainment by students is inadequate. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress that it has made in remedying these weaknesses. The school would receive two to five days' notice of such a visit.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Although the standards sixth form students reach are below the national average, they make satisfactory progress. The sixth form has an inclusive entry policy and accepts students of all levels of attainment. Few students fail to complete their courses. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form

and are very positive about the relationships they have with staff. Initial individual course guidance is a good feature of the sixth form, as is the help and support students receive in meeting the demands of the courses they study.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all students achieve their potential through:
- detailed monitoring of individual students' performance within and across subjects
- develop further strategies to improve students' attendance
- develop and support middle managers so that all discharge the full range of their responsibilities
- improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The students now make satisfactory progress even though the standards they reach are still exceptionally low by the end of Years 9 and 11. At least satisfactory, and often good, progress was observed in the lessons seen during the inspection. Students in Year 9, who took tests in 2006, started the school with attainment a great deal below average but their results show that they made satisfactory progress in their first three years in the school. In 2006, a higher proportion of students achieved five or more higher grades in their GCSE examinations than previously and their standards were closer to the national average. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities made greater progress than their peers nationally.

The proportion of students who did not gain any certification on accredited courses in Year 11 is much worse than the national average. This group of students is having a significant impact on the achievement and progress recorded for the school. Boys, and students who enter the school with lower levels of attainment at Key Stage 2 in particular, did badly in this respect.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory. Students derive a strong spiritual dimension to their development from assemblies, form periods and in subjects such as religious education. They look at complex moral issues, learn right from wrong and work cooperatively together in many activities. Students' cultural understanding is weaker as there are fewer occasions offered where they can learn about other ethnicities, countries, their traditions and cultural contributions. These aspects of the curriculum are not yet identified thoroughly within the programme the school offers. Students enjoy and value their work in school but there remains a higher than average incidence of authorised absence which school measures have not yet

eradicated. General behaviour in lessons is now good but some low-level misbehaviour remains around the school. Students are encouraged to develop many personal qualities and to contribute to community activities but creatively contributing to school and community life is not yet part of every student's school experience. They develop skills for their working lives through ICT, work and enterprise experience and, in many cases, vocational courses but low standards of attainment raise barriers to career prospects for many.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Examples of good, and sometimes very good, teaching were observed. Students' behaviour was generally well managed and supported by a range of well-structured tasks that helped involve and motivate them. Very good learning and progress were evident in some lessons, notably where teachers' expectations were finely matched to students' needs and potential. The use of performance data is not widely used by teachers to pitch learning at an appropriate level and to monitor progress, and insufficient use is made of assessment information to plan students' learning. It was not uncommon to find a whole class being set the same task - with the same expectations of all students. Until recently, improving the quality of teaching and learning has not been pursued rigorously enough as part of a relentless drive to raise standards. As a result, effective practice found in some aspects of the curriculum, and which has resulted in good achievement, has not been systematically explored, openly discussed and routinely shared.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum and other activities are satisfactory. Strengths include the very good partnership arrangements established between the school and local employers and training agencies. As well as creating opportunities for work placements, these partnerships create opportunities for a minority of students, who struggle to follow a traditional school-based curriculum, to pursue vocational courses and provide the encouragement they need to remain in full-time education. However, the current curriculum structure limits the choice of subjects students can opt for in Year 10. Whilst 50-minute lessons work well for some subjects, in practical subjects there is often insufficient time to achieve the standards of which some students are capable. Specialist technology status has provided a focus for the school. The expertise of specialist staff and the good range of equipment and resources contribute to students' enjoyment and achievement in a range of subjects and also enable the school to run a wider range of technology-related courses and qualifications.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The care, guidance and support of students are satisfactory. Staff are highly committed to the students in their care and there are robust procedures available for responding to students' identified needs. The school's learning support unit is successful in helping many students maintain satisfactory attendance records and in supporting them with their schoolwork. However, detailed data on academic progress and other information on all students are not yet fully used. Information is not generated concerning the progress, or lack of it, being made by individuals or groups or to find out if initiatives are working. Individual and group target setting is insufficiently precise. This restricts achievement. Students receive good advice on curriculum choices and careers. Those on vocational courses particularly value the experience gained in preparing for work. Students are protected by the measures in place to vet staff and assess risks in learning activities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new permanent headteacher is showing an astute appreciation of what needs to be done in order for the school to improve. She has quickly identified strengths and areas of weakness and is setting clear priorities and giving strong direction to the staff and to students. One reason for the low standard of students' attainment has been the lack of detailed target setting and monitoring of individual students' performance. This is improving, with new systems being put in place, but still lacks a rigorous focus both within and across subjects. New systems of line management are in place, ensuring the accountability of middle managers and, where weaknesses are apparent, appropriate support and training are being identified for middle managers. Senior leaders have a clear view of the performance of different subject areas and are taking appropriate steps to improve accountability and consistency and to encourage the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning. Both senior and middle managers have an accurate view about the quality of teaching in the school. Governance of the school is satisfactory and the school meets all current government responsibilities related to safeguarding its students.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and my team of inspectors when we visited your school recently. We really appreciated your friendliness, openness and honesty.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. You enjoy your time at school and are well cared for. You have good relationships with your teachers and support staff, all of who want you to do well. Your behaviour in lessons is good and you have good attitudes to school and to learning. The school provides you with good sporting and leisure facilities and the opportunity to get involved in a range of musical and dramatic productions.

However, the standards you achieve in Year 9 tests and at GCSE should be higher. Careful monitoring of your progress and more targeted support will help you to achieve higher standards. Your teachers have been asked to ensure that this happens in all subjects and they will also be looking at how they can improve the quality of teaching across all subjects to ensure that you learn more effectively.

Your new permanent headteacher has very clear views on what the school needs to do in order to improve and she is making a real difference to the way the school is being led and managed and is putting in place systems to bring about improvements.

You can help by making sure that you attend school regularly, behave as well on corridors and at social times as you do in lessons and make a determined effort to contribute fully to the life and work of the school.

We wish you every success in the future.